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J. M. HILL'S CANE COLLECTION

SOME achieve collections; some have collections thrust upon them. Of the latter class is the museum of walking sticks of which Mr. J. M. Hill, of the Standard and Union Square Theatres, in this city, is the proud possessor. His treasure-house of canes contained over two hundred of those—not always ornamental—articles when he met with the accident which transferred him, with the aid of crutches, into a quadruped animal.

It is a curious fact that in spite of this perpetual gravitation towards him of walking sticks, Mr. Hill never used one in his daily movements. Yet, in spite of this fact, that he was never seen with a cane, all his friends and acquaintances seemed, without visible warrant, to be actuated by a wild desire to present him with various types and specimens of the cane-maker's art.

The catastrophe, which resulted in a dislocated ankle and a badly fractured leg, gave a fresh and enormous impulse to this remarkable tendency of his intimates. Beyond even the circle of his friends and acquaintances went the wave of sympathy. As he lay on his back, his shattered leg swathed in surgical bandages, the tide of canes and sticks rose with redoubled rapidity. Almost every trip of the elevator, of the Imperial Hotel, carried a bell boy loaded down with canes, and resembling a Roman lictor, with his fasces. They were of all shapes and sizes and dimensions. Their individual values had an equally tremendous range.

In less than three weeks from the date of his casualty Mr. Hill's two hundred and odd walking sticks had swelled to a total of between seven and eight hundred. Every zone of the globe was represented. The orange, the palmetto, the grape-vine and the bamboo of the tropics, were matched by the walrus-tusk and the sword-fish snout of the Arctic Pole. In some instances, so rare and unrecognizable were the canes that they were accompanied by elaborate certificates and affidavits setting forth their origin and quality. In one day alone, Mr. Hill received enough sticks, varying in size and rigidity, to furnish therewith half the theatrical combinations traveling on the road. A perfect forest, or jungle of canes almost ousted their proprietor from his comfortable quarters in the hotel.

Many of them, of course, were rather conventional and commonplace, and had but little intrinsic value; but were rendered of exceeding worth to Mr. Hill by the spirit of sympathy and affection which contributed to what may—in want of a better word—be called his canery. Several of these minor tributes are the testimonials of enthusiastic and admiring Irishmen, thanks to whose regard he was enriched with probably two hundred and fifty black-thorns. An expert, familiar with the qualifications insisted upon in the Green Isle, declared, with tears in his eyes, that nothing could have been left behind for the glory of Donnybrook Fair; in fact he strenuously protested that it would be excessively ungrateful of Mr. Hill if he did not get up a Donnybrook of his own, in order to do justice to the weapons of Old Erin.

The more valuable canes are of real and exceeding artistic worth. In some instances this is due to the wood itself. There are varieties of timber in the collection which are unique on this Continent. A few of them come from that vast repository of what may be called "jewel woods," Brazil. Some, again, a little less unusual, but still very rare, are from California. One of the most remarkable of the former is a section of a giant vine—such as one encounters on the Amazon—and which, for all the world, marvelously simulates a *Lignum-vitæ* serpent.

Some of the California canes seem to have absorbed precious stones into their fibre, so brilliant are the knots and specks in the wood.

In contra-distinction to these native canes are others full of European interest and tradition. One of the most interesting and typical of these latter is a splendid specimen of the Ziegenhainer, the prodigious staff without which no Heidelberg student considers himself properly equipped for the promenade or war-path. Contrasted with this Goliath's beam is a dainty twig, eloquent of the Harvard undergraduate. There is, even, an example of the Princeton collegiate cane, for which the annual rush occurs. To one attaches the remembrance of having been on occasion used by Frederick William, the First, of Prussia, to chastise his family and discipline his six-foot Grenadiers. Anybody who has contemplated this latter instrument, cannot fail to comprehend the preference of the Grenadiers for a bout with the French to a personal interview with their monarch and commander.

As an offset to the majestic cane of Frederick William, Mr. Hill possesses one of Louis the Fourteenth's familiar snuff-box sticks, the clouded amber top of which to this day retains at least a ghostly aroma of the Grand Monarque's favorite rappee.

In curious contrast with this interesting Bourbon relic, for

which Messrs. Stafford & Whittaker have vainly negotiated with Mr. Hill, in order to enrich their own "imperial" hoard, are three essentially modern, not to say American, contrivances. One is a sort of cigarette magazine, something after the model of the "La Belle Rifle." As soon as you withdraw one cigarette another one immediately takes its place. Inasmuch as Mr. Hill has an aversion to red neckties, the original store of securities still remains untouched.

The second American device is a sword stick, the contents of which are sufficiently attenuated to do duty as a tooth-pick or a knitting-needle. The third is a distinctly Philadelphia invention, very popular among the elite of Quaker society. It is known as the "Speak-easy," and was invented to counteract the Sabbatarian tendency of the local excise board. Philadelphia swells, meeting each other on Sundays, no longer exchange snuff boxes, but walking canes, so that in one community, at least, the spectacle of a dude sucking the end of his cane is easily understood.

Incomparably the longest of all these sticks is the Bavarian alpenstick, crested with a Chamois horn, presented by Mr. Max Freeman. The most expensive of them all is a cane whereof at least one-half is of the purest and shiniest ivory, carved with an exquisite delicacy, recalling the patient labor of the middle ages. The actual cost of this work was five hundred dollars (\$500.00) and competent authorities declare that it will be almost impossible, even at twice the expense, to duplicate the work.

During last week Mr. Hill received the very latest of these tokens of good will. It ranks as No. 832 and is indeed a pretentious piece of portable property. The handle, or crook, is one of the largest of solid pieces of buckhorn ever put to such a use, and is rendered all the more striking by bands of silver, the precious metal being precipitated on the horn by electricity.

It is doubtful if there exists anywhere a more diversified, a larger or more valuable collection of canes than that of the urbane manager of the Union Square and Standard Theatres; of which, after all, the most "imperial" gem is the Tannhauser stick, which annually "blooms in the spring, Tra, la, la."

ART AT REICHARD & CO.'S

THE report that the house of Reichard & Co. was likely to terminate its honorable career of sixteen years in the handling of works of art at 226 Fifth Avenue may be authoritatively denied. The rumor appears to have originated out of the death of Mr. John Hodges, and the consequent necessity for Mr. Reichard's carrying the business on alone. It is gratifying to know that these galleries, which are among the most accessible and beautifully arranged in the city, are to remain a source of pleasure and profit to our collectors, and that the collection of the house is not to be dispersed by auction. It is a characteristic of the Reichard galleries that the meretricious or merely showy lines of art find no representations in their collections. Some of the choicest gems of the great French school of 1830 have passed from the cabinets of Reichard & Co. into our great collections, and one may always count upon finding sterling examples of this school with them. In later and contemporaneous foreign art, such as Cazin, Lerolle, Van Marcke, Mettling, Mauve and others, the house keeps pace with the artistic advancement of the time, while the claims of true merit among our own painters find constant and generous acknowledgment from it. Some of the exhibitions of Reichard & Co. have introduced to our collectors American artists of the first merit. The several exhibitions which they have made of the works of Winslow Homer alone have had much to do with properly presenting the art of this American master to American collectors, and their special exhibitions, which vary the current of the season, are always of a high standard and a judicious order of selection.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

MONK LEWIS, CITY:—Your copy of "The Monk" is not a rarity. It is the second edition, which Lewis himself expurgated. The only edition with all the free and lascivious passages in it, is the first, 1796.

NAPOLÉONIST, CITY:—The miniature you submit is of Victor Perrin, Duc de Belluno. He was a private of artillery at the siege of Toulon, fought the succeeding campaigns under Napoleon, and was made a marshal after the battle of Friedland. After Napoleon went to Elba, he took service under the Bourbons, and later under Louis Philippe. The miniature is undoubtedly of the Empire period.

George Collins, a bookbinder, was indicted recently in London for stealing a printed book valued at \$400, the property of Henry Sotheman. He pleaded guilty. The book was a copy of the first edition of Burns. Collins had previously been convicted for a crime and was sentenced to twelve months of hard labor.